
DEVOTIONAL READINGS FROM NATURE

Edited by David F. Garner

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"He will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also does not wither. Whatever he does shall prosper." Psalm 1:3 WEB

Description

This is a 15-day devotional booklet intended to help you on your Christian walk. Each day includes a one- to two-page reading that draws spiritual lessons from nature as Jesus Christ often did. It is geared toward adults and adolescents but is appropriate for all ages. See the Preface below.

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Preface

The Creation, or Nature, has been called God's first book. It was the original instruction manual by which humans could mine the depths of God's infinite character and purpose. It was the primary means he intended by which humans would learn how he cares for them and all his creatures. While sin has muddied this first great work, it still fulfills its purpose of instruction for those who care to look. Because the purity of God as revealed in nature was tarnished by sin, a sequel was needed to ensure that human kind would know of their Creator. This sequel also contained a new chapter. It laid out the plan by which the Creator would restore his blemished creation to its original state. The Bible is now the foremost book of the Creator God. But the book of nature has not been wholly replaced. It still offers incredible insights into its Creator's character. And because we live in close connection with nature it provides a medium by which the lessons of God can be constantly reinforced.

These are just some of the reasons why the Savior chose to use nature as the main textbook for his followers. The example of Jesus' use of nature in spiritual instruction has continued to be practiced by generations of Christian leaders and teachers. This short 15-day devotional offers a few timeless examples of the power of nature to impart spiritual lessons. It includes selections from giants in Christian literature including Charles Spurgeon, St. Francis of Assisi, and G.K. Chesterton. Their specialties range from preacher, to theologian, philosopher, scientist, and laity. It closes with a selection from the Bible itself that hails the return of Christ. It is my sincere hope that you will be blessed and inspired to study God's first book more to discover how you can grow more deeply in your relationship with our Creator. Here is a selection to wet your appetite:

"Let us consider, beloved, how the Master showeth to us continually the resurrection that is about to be, of which he hath made our Lord Jesus Christ the first fruit, having raised him from the dead.

Let us look, beloved, at the resurrection that is ever taking place.

Day and night show to us the resurrection; the night is lulled to rest, the day ariseth; the day departeth, the night cometh on. Let us consider the fruits, in what way a grain of corn is sown.

The sower goeth forth and casteth it into the ground, and when the seeds are cast into the ground, they that fell into the ground dry and naked are dissolved; then after their dissolution, the mighty power of the providence of the Lord raiseth them up, and from one seed many grow up and bring forth fruits." - St. Clement of Rome; *First Epistle to the Corinthians*

Sincerely,

David F. Garner
Editor
www.outdoorlessons.org

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Day 1

"There have been many very famous kings' gardens, such as those hanging gardens in Nineveh, wherein Sardanapalus delighted himself, and that remarkable garden of Cyrus, in which he took such great interest... Imagination might bid you wander among the beauties of the celebrated villas and gardens of the Roman emperors, or make you linger amid the roses and lilies of the voluptuous gardens of 'the Persian caliphs, but we have nobler work in hand. I call you to come with me to the orchard of pomegranates, to beds of spices, camphire with spikenard, calamus and cinnamon, myrrh and aloes, with trees of frankincense. I am not about to speak of the gardens of any earthly monarch, for we can find far fairer flowers; and rarer fruits in the gardens of the King of kings, the resorts of His Son, the Prince Immanuel. The first king's garden was THE GARDEN OF PARADISE, which was situated in the midst of Eden.

...It was doubtless a fairer place than we have ever seen, and much more marvelous for beauty than we can imagine. It was full of all manner of delights, a fruitful spot wherein the man who was set to keep it would have no need to toil, but would find it a happy and refreshing exercise to train the luxurious plants. No sweat was ever seen upon his happy brow, for he cultivated a virgin soil. Abundance of luscious fruits ministered to his necessities. He could stretch himself upon soft couches of moss, and no inclemencies of weather disturbed his repose.... In the midst of the garden grew that mysterious Tree of Life, of which we know so little literally, but of which, I trust, we know so much in its spiritual meaning, for we have fed upon its fruits, and have been healed by its leaves. Hard by it stood the tree of knowledge of good and evil, placed there as the test of obedience. Adam's mind was equally balanced, it had no bias to evil, and God left him to the freedom of his will, giving this as the test of his loyalty, that, if obedient, he would never touch the fruit of that one tree. Why need he? There were tens of thousands of trees... Why need he desire that solitary tree which God had fenced and hedged about? But, in an evil hour, at the serpent's base suggestion... he put forth his hand and plucked from the forbidden tree! The mere plucking of the fruit seems little to the thoughtless, but the breaking of the Maker's law was a great offense to heaven, for it was man throwing down the gage of battle against his Creator, and breaking his allegiance to his Lord and Master. This was great, great in itself and in its mischievous effects, for Adam fell that day, and out of Eden he was driven to till the thankless, thorn-bearing soil, and you and I fell in him, and were banished with him. 'We were in his loins... He was the "father of us all," and on us he has brought the curse of toil, and in us all he has sown the seeds of iniquity. Let it never be forgotten, in connection with the Garden of Eden, that we are not now a pure and sinless race, and cannot be by nature, however civilized we may become. Men are born no longer with balanced minds, but a heavy weight of original sin in the scale. We are averse to that which is good. The bias of the mind of man, when he is born into the world, is towards that which is evil, and we as naturally go astray as the serpent naturally learns to hiss, or the wolf to tear and to devour.

Beware of thinking too little of the fall. Slight thoughts upon the fall are at the root of false theologies; the mischief that has been wrought in us is not a trifling matter, but a thing to be trembled at. Only the Divine Hand can reclaim us...." -Charles Spurgeon; *Teachings of Nature In the Kingdom of Grace*

Day 2

"I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looked up on the sky and clouds; there came into my mind, a sweet sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction: majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness.

After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered: there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything.

God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon, for a long time; and so in the daytime, spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things: in the meantime, singing forth with a low voice, my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. And scarce anything, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning. Formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. I used to be a person uncommonly terrified with thunder: and it used to strike me with terror, when I saw a thunderstorm rising. But now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God at the first appearance of a thunderstorm. And used to take the opportunity at such times, to fix myself to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God's thunder: which often times was exceeding entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God. And while I viewed, used to spend my time, as it always seemed natural to me, to sing or chant forth my meditations; to speak my thoughts in soliloquies, and speak with a singing voice."

-Johnathon Edwards; *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 16: Letters and Personal Writings*

Day 3

"1 For truly all men who had no perception of God were vain by nature, and didn't gain power to know him who exists from the good things that are seen. They didn't recognize the architect from his works. 2 But they thought that either fire, or wind, or swift air, or circling stars, or raging water, or luminaries of heaven were gods that rule the world. 3 If it was through delight in their beauty that they took them to be gods, let them know how much better their Sovereign Lord is than these, for the first author of beauty created them. 4 But if it was through astonishment at their power and influence, then let them understand from them how much more powerful he who formed them is. 5 For from the greatness of the beauty of created things, mankind forms the corresponding image of their Maker. 6 But yet for these men there is but small blame, for they too perhaps go astray while they are seeking God and desiring to find him. 7 For they diligently search while living amongst his works, and they trust their sight that the things that they look at are beautiful. 8 But again even they are not to be excused. 9 For if they had power to know so much, that they should be able to explore the world, how is it that they didn't find the Sovereign Lord sooner? 10 But miserable were they, and in dead things were their hopes, Who called them gods which are works of men's hands, gold and silver, skillfully made, and likenesses of animals, or a useless stone, the work of an ancient hand. 11 Yes and if some woodcutter, having sawn down a tree that is easily moved, skillfully strips away all its bark, and fashioning it in attractive form, makes a useful vessel to serve his life's needs. 12 Burning the scraps from his handiwork to cook his food, he eats his fill. 13 Taking a discarded scrap which served no purpose, a crooked piece of wood and full of knots, carves it with the diligence of his idleness, and shapes it by the skill of his idleness. He shapes it in the image of a man, 14 or makes it like some paltry animal, smearing it with something red, painting it red, and smearing over every stain in it. 15 Having made a worthy chamber for it, he sets it in a wall, securing it with iron. 16 He plans for it that it may not fall down, knowing that it is unable to help itself (for truly it is an image, and needs help). 17 When he makes his prayer concerning goods and his marriage and children, he is not ashamed to speak to that which has no life. 18 Yes, for health, he calls upon that which is weak. For life, he implores that which is dead. For aid, he supplicates that which has no experience. For a good journey, he asks that which can't so much as move a step. 19 And for profit in business and good success of his hands, he asks ability from that which has hands with no ability." - *Wisdom of Solomon 13 (WEB)*

"Physical nature must not be made the direct object of obedience; it must be enjoyed, not worshipped. Stars and mountains must not be taken seriously. If they are, we end where the pagan nature worship ended. ...only the supernatural has taken a sane view of Nature. The essence of all pantheism, evolutionism, and modern cosmic religion is really in this proposition: that Nature is our mother. Unfortunately, if you regard Nature as a mother, you discover that she is a step-mother. The main point of Christianity was this: that Nature is not our mother: Nature is our sister. We can be proud of her beauty, since we have the same father; but she has no authority over us; we have to admire, but not to imitate. This gives to the typically Christian pleasure in this earth a strange touch of lightness that is almost frivolity. Nature was a solemn mother to the worshippers of Isis and Cybele. Nature was a solemn mother to Wordsworth or to Emerson. But Nature is not solemn to Francis of Assisi or to George Herbert. To St. Francis, Nature is a sister, and even a younger sister: a little, dancing sister, to be laughed at as well as loved." -G. K. Chesterton; *Orthodoxy*

Day 4

"O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God,

to you belong praise, glory,

honour and all blessing.

Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation

and especially for our Brother Sun,

who brings us the day and the light;

he is strong and shines magnificently.

O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon,

and for the stars

which you have set shining and lovely

in the heavens.

Be praised, my Lord,

for our Brothers Wind and Air

and every kind of weather

by which you, Lord,

uphold life in all your creatures.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,

who is very useful to us,

and humble and precious and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire,

through whom you give us light in the darkness:

he is bright and lively and strong.

Be praised, my Lord,

for Sister Earth, our Mother,

who nourishes us and sustains us,

bringing forth

fruits and vegetables of many kinds

and flowers of many colours.

Be praised, my Lord,

for those who forgive for love of you;

and for those

who bear sickness and weakness

in peace and patience

- you will grant them a crown.

Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death,

whom we must all face.

I praise and bless you, Lord,

and I give thanks to you,

and I will serve you in all humility."

-St. Francis of Assisi; *The Canticle of Creation*

Day 5

"If you accept Jesus Christ's presentation of God and then look at the present order of the material universe you will find what is meant by the phrase, "the cosmic refraction of God." Whenever God presents Himself in the present order of things, He appears refracted, that is, distorted to our reason; we cannot understand Him. When a man comes face to face with Nature, God seems to be almighty against all his conceptions. God allows things in the cosmic world which are a refraction, they do not continue in the straight, simple line my mind tells me they ought to take. Job says, in effect, "If God chooses to be almighty against me, where am I? If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand." The eccentric old poet, George Herbert, has a poem in which this phrase recurs—

Be not Almighty, let me say Against, but for me.

The reason for Job's agony and distress is not a temperamental one; he has been brought to the heart of things and finds tragedy there, and a gap. The only way out is by means of the Redemption; in the mean- time Job is stating the perplexity as it appears to a man who is really beginning to think. Every one of us in our day and generation whether we have ever thought deeply or not, has faced this problem: If God is love, why does He allow the hawk to kill the spar- row? As Tennyson puts it—" . . . Nature, red in tooth and claw." Why does He allow one animal to feed on another? Why are nations allowed to fight each other? These are not passing perplexities but real puzzles, and the only thing to do is either to deny the facts or to confess we are agnostic. Job is up against the problem that things do not look as they should if God is the kind of God his implicit belief constrains him to declare He ought to be. Job's friends deny the facts; they won't have it that there is any perplex- ity, and they say to Job, "The reason God appears refracted is because you yourself are refracted."

The cosmic force makes God appear indifferent and cruel and remote, and if you become a special pleader of any particular creed you have to shut your eyes to facts. The only revelation which gives a line of explanation is that there is something wrong at the basis of things, hence the refraction. The apostle Paul says that creation is all out of gear and twisted; it is waiting "for the manifestation of the sons of God." In the meantime, the problem remains.

Look at the world through either a microscope or a telescope and you will be dwarfed into terror by the infinitely minute or the infinitely great; both are appalling. When you touch the cosmic force, apart from the blinkers of intellect, there is a wild problem in it. Nature is wild, not tame. No man is capable of solving the riddle of the universe because the universe is mad, and the only thing that will put it right is not man's reason, but the sagacity of God which is manifested in the Redemption of Jesus Christ. A Christian is an avowed agnostic intellectually; his attitude is, "I have reached the limit of my knowledge, and I humbly accept the revelation of God given by Jesus Christ.""

-Oswald Chambers; *The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers*

Day 6

"There is no one [science] of them all which is not, in some measure, touched and affected by it [theology], or which is not in some measure included in it. As all nature, whether mental or material, may be conceived of as only the mode in which God manifests Himself, every science which investigates nature and ascertains its laws is occupied with the discovery of the modes of the divine action, and as such might be considered a branch of theology. And, on the other hand, as all nature, whether mental or material, owes its existence to God, every science which investigates nature and ascertains its laws, depends for its foundation upon that science which would make known what God is and what the relations are in which He stands to the work of His hands and in which they stand to Him; and must borrow from it those conceptions through which alone the material with which it deals can find its explanation or receive its proper significance.

...The science of Him and His relations is the necessary ground of all science. All speculation takes us back to Him; all inquiry presupposes Him; and every phase of science consciously or unconsciously rests at every step on the science that makes Him known. Theology, thus, as the science which treats of God, lies at the root of all sciences."

-Benjamin B. Warfield; *The Idea of Systematic Theology*

Day 7

"He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for apart from Me ye can do nothing." (verse 5).

"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall be My disciples." (verse 8)

Here we are led on a step further: the Husbandman is not content unless the "more fruit" becomes "much fruit." What new emphasis this gives to the central thought of the parable and of the true Christian life, that bearing fruit for the life and salvation of men is to be the one object of existence. It is only as Christians give themselves up to this, that the need and the meaning and the reality of abiding in Christ can be apprehended. How earnestly we need to pray that God may grant, in the Spirit of wisdom and revelation enlightened eyes of the heart that we may know the "hope of our calling," to bear much fruit.

Our Lord twice speaks of the "much fruit." He first tells how naturally it will come to them who abide in Him. Then He gives the double motive for it: the Father will be glorified, and we shall be true disciples. Let us study the call to bear much fruit, as it points to Christ, and our life of abiding in Him; to the Father, and our glorifying Him; to ourselves, and our becoming true disciples.

"As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine: no more can ye except ye abide in Me." "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for apart from Me ye can do nothing." We have seen what a branch is: an outgrowth of the vine, partaker of its life, begotten and maintained as part of itself to afford a channel through which it can bring forth its grapes. And we regard nothing as more natural, or so much a matter of course, about which there cannot be a moment's doubt, as that the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine. The union with the vine must be continual and unbroken if the vine is unceasingly to maintain its supply of sap for the bearing and ripening of the fruit. Abiding in the vine is the one indispensable condition of being a living, healthy, fruitbearing branch."

-Andrew Murray; *The Fruit of the Vine*

Day 8

"Upon all created things is seen the impress of the Deity. Nature testifies of God. The susceptible mind, brought in contact with the miracle and mystery of the universe, cannot but recognize the working of infinite power. Not by its own inherent energy does the earth produce its bounties, and year by year continue its motion around the sun. An unseen hand guides the planets in their circuit of the heavens. A mysterious life pervades all nature—a life that sustains the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity, that lives in the insect atom which floats in the summer breeze, that wings the flight of the swallow and feeds the young ravens which cry, that brings the bud to blossom and the flower to fruit.

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds. Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same—a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin.

To him who learns thus to interpret its teachings, all nature becomes illuminated; the world is a lesson book, life a school. The unity of man with nature and with God, the universal dominion of law, the results of transgression, cannot fail of impressing the mind and molding the character.

These are lessons that our children need to learn. To the little child, not yet capable of learning from the printed page or of being introduced to the routine of the schoolroom, nature presents an unfailing source of instruction and delight. The heart not yet hardened by contact with evil is quick to recognize the Presence that pervades all created things. The ear as yet undulled by the world's clamor is attentive to the Voice that speaks through nature's utterances. And for those of older years, needing continually its silent reminders of the spiritual and eternal, nature's teaching will be no less a source of pleasure and of instruction. As the dwellers in Eden learned from nature's pages, as Moses discerned God's handwriting on the Arabian plains and mountains, and the child Jesus on the hillsides of Nazareth, so the children of today may learn of Him. The unseen is illustrated by the seen. On everything upon the earth, from the loftiest tree of the forest to the lichen that clings to the rock, from the boundless ocean to the tiniest shell on the shore, they may behold the image and superscription of God."

-E. G. White; *Education*

Day 9

"The tree has grown from seed. For a while in its infancy it bears no fruit, and it is not expected to bear any. Before its nature is developed, it neither does good nor evil, in a tangible or practical form. Its nature and tendencies are fixed, but they are not known. People who look on the tender plant putting forth its leaves, expect that when it comes to maturity its fruit will be good. At length, while the tree is yet young, it begins to bear fruit. There is not much at first. The quantity is diminutive, but the quality is well defined. There is no mistake here. The fruit is bitter—is bad. But it is young. What could you expect? Wait for wisdom. They wait, they fence, they water; but the fruit is still bitter.

In the case of the tree, long as you look only on its fruit, you may be deceived in your judgment. The fruit may be thoroughly evil, and yet in colour and shape it may be like good fruit. It is only by tasting it that you can certainly determine its character.

Our Father is the husbandman, and we are his husbandry. When we bear fruit, he is not contented with looking on its external appearance. He comes near and tastes it.

A man cannot certainly determine the taste of the fruit that his neighbours bear—cannot certainly determine the taste even of his own. "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." Peter did not discern what was the taste Of his own soul's emotions; but his Master knew and loathed it: "Get thee behind me, Satan."

The outward appearance of a gift, for example, may have all the lineaments of charity; yet to Him who looketh on the heart, it may be a nauseous outgrowth of selfishness or pride. We must be purged from dead works as well from bad works ere we can acceptably serve the living God. Dead works, though in form they may be the fulfilment of his law, are not sweet to his taste. That is a dreadful sentence which the risen Saviour pronounced on the fruit of a bitter tree: "I will spue thee out of my mouth.""

- William Arnot; *The Lesser Parables of Our Lord*

Day 10

"This most beautiful System of the Sun, Planets, and Comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being. And if the fixed Stars are the centers of other like systems, these, being form'd by the like wise counsel, must be all subject to the dominion of One; especially since the light of the fixed Stars is of the same nature with the light of the Sun, and from every system light passes into all the other systems. And lest the systems of the fixed Stars should, by their gravity, fall on each other mutually, he hath placed those Systems at immense distances from one another.

This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all: And on account of his dominion he is wont to be called Lord God Pantokrator, or Universal Ruler. For God is a relative word, and has a respect to servants; and Deity is the dominion of God, not over his own body, as those imagine who fancy God to be the soul of the world, but over servants. The supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect; but a being, however perfect, without dominion, cannot be said to be Lord God; for we say, my God, your God, the God of Israel, the God of Gods, and Lord of Lords; but we do not say, my Eternal, your Eternal, the Eternal of Israel, the Eternal of Gods; we do not say, my Infinite, or my Perfect: These are titles which have no respect to servants. The word God usually signifies Lord; but every lord is not a God. It is the dominion of a spiritual being which constitutes a God; a true, supreme, or imaginary dominion makes a true, supreme, or imaginary God. And from his true dominion it follows that the true God is a Living, Intelligent, and Powerful Being; and, from his other perfections, that he is Supreme or most Perfect. He is Eternal and Infinite, Omnipotent and Omniscient; that is, his duration reaches from Eternity to Eternity; his presence from Infinity to Infinity; he governs all things, and knows all things that are or can be done. He is not Eternity and Infinity, but Eternal and Infinite; he is not Duration and Space, but he endures and is present. He endures forever, and is every where present; and, by existing always and every where, he constitutes Duration and Space.... All that diversity of natural things which we find, suited to different times and places, could arise from nothing but the ideas and will of a Being necessarily existing. But, by way of allegory, God is said to see, to speak, to laugh, to love, to hate, to desire, to give, to receive, to rejoice, to be angry, to fight, to frame, to work, to build. For all our notions of God are taken from the ways of mankind, by a certain similitude which, though not perfect, has some likeness, however. And thus much concerning God; to discourse of whom from the appearances of things, does certainly belong to Natural Philosophy."

-Sir Isaac Newton; General Scholium to *Principia mathematica*

Day 11

"I believe the Great Creator of the universe had young people in mind when the following beautiful passage were written: In the 12th chapter of Job and the 7th & 8th verses, we are urged thus: But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.

In St. John the 8th chapter and 32nd verse. we have this remarkable statement: And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Were I permitted to paraphrase it, I put it thus: And you shall know science and science shall set free. because science is truth. There is nothing more assuring, more inspiring, or more literally true than the above passages from Holy Writ. We get closer to God as we get more intimately and understandingly acquainted with the things he has created.

I know of nothing more inspiring than that of making discoveries for ones self. The study of nature is not only entertaining, instructive and the only true method that leads up to the creative mind and a clear understanding of the great natural principles which surround every branch of business in which we may engage. Aside from this it encourages investigation, stimulates and develops originality in a way that helps the student to find himself more quickly and accurately than any plan yet worked out. The singing birds, the buzzing bees, the opening flower, and the budding trees, along with other forms of animate and inanimate matter, all have their marvelous creation story to tell each searcher for truth...

We doubt if there is a normal boy or girl in all Christendom with the five senses who have with increased interest and profit, the various forms, movements and the gorgeous paintings of the butterfly, many do not know, but will study with increased enthusiasm the striking analogy' its life bears to human soul.

Even the ancient Greeks with their imperfect knowledge of insects recognized this truth, when they gave the same Greek name psyche to Soul, or the spirit of life, and alike to the butterfly. They sculptured over the effigy of their dead the figure of a butterfly floating away as it were in his breath. Poets to this day follow the simile. More and more as we closer and closer in touch with nature and its teachings are we able to see the Divine and are therefore fitted to interpret correctly the various languages spoken by all forms of nature about us. From the frail little mushroom, which seems to spring up in a night and perish ere the morning sun sinks to rest in the western horizon, to the giant red woods of the Pacific slope that have stood the storms for centuries and vie with the snow-capped peaks of the loftiest mountains in their magnificence and grandeur.

First, to me, my dear young friends, nature in its varied forms are the little windows through which God permits me to commune with Him, and to see much of His glory, majesty, and power by simply lifting the curtain and looking in. Second, I love to think of nature as unlimited stations, through which God speaks to us every day. every hour and every moment of our lives, if we will only tune in and remain so. Third, I am more and more convinced, as I search for truth that no ardent student of nature, can "Behold the lilies

of the field"; or "Look unto the hills", or study even the microscopic wonders of a stagnant pool of water, and honestly declare himself to be an Infidel.

To who already love nature, I need only to say, pursue its truths with a new zest, and give to the world the value of the answers to the many questions you have asked the greatest of all teachers-Mother Nature. To those who have as yet not learned the secret of true happiness, which is the joy of coming into the closest relationship with the Maker and Preserver of all things: begin now to study the little things in your own door yard, going from the known to the nearest related unknown for indeed each new truth brings one nearer to God."

-George Washington Carver; *How to Search for Truth*

Day 12

A compilation of Martin Luther quotes on nature:

"It is God who creates effects and preserves all things through God's almighty power."

"If God is to create or to preserve a creature, God must be present and must make and preserve God's creation both in its innermost and outermost aspects."

"God's entire divine nature is wholly and entirely in all creatures, more deeply, more inwardly, more present than the creature is to itself."

"God is entirely and personally present in the wilderness, in the garden, in the field."

"The power of God is present at all places, even in the tiniest tree leaf."

"God is in all creatures, even in the smallest flowers."

"Adam was created, as it were, intoxicated with rejoicing toward God and was delighted also with all the other creatures."

"Animals are footprints of God."

"In a mouse we admire God's creation and craft work. The same may be said about flies."

"Adam and Eve derived the fullness of joy and bliss from their contemplation of all the animal creatures."

"If the heart has been reformed by the spirit, it makes use of both the useful and delightful things created and given by God in a holy manner and with thanksgiving."

"In a delightful garden, sowing, planting or digging are not hardship but are done with a zeal and a certain pleasure."

"God wants to be praised for nourishing and cherishing, for God cherishes all creatures. God is not only the creator, but is also the sustainer and nourisher."

"God is wholly present in all creation, in every corner, behind you and before you. Do you think God is sleeping on a pillow in heaven? God is watching over you and protecting you."

When asked what he would do if the world would end tomorrow, "I would plant a tree today."

-Martin Luther; Various Works

Day 13

"O LORD my God, favor Your servant with the blessings of Your sweetness that I may merit to approach Your magnificent Sacrament worthily and devoutly. Lift up my heart to You and take away from me this heavy indolence. Visit me with Your saving grace that I may in spirit taste Your sweetness which lies hidden in this Sacrament like water in the depths of a spring. Enlighten my eyes to behold this great Mystery, and give me strength to believe in it with firm faith.

For it is Your work, not the power of man, Your sacred institution, not his invention. No man is able of himself to comprehend and understand these things which surpass even the keen vision of angels. How, then, shall I, an unworthy sinner who am but dust and ashes, be able to fathom and understand so great a mystery?

O Lord, I come to You at Your command in simplicity of heart, in good, firm faith, with hope and reverence, and I truly believe that You are present here in this Sacrament, God and man. It is Your will that I receive You and unite myself to You in love. Wherefore, I beg Your mercy and ask that special grace be given me, that I may be wholly dissolved in You and filled with Your love, no longer to concern myself with exterior consolations. For this, the highest and most worthy Sacrament, is the health of soul and body, the cure of every spiritual weakness. In it my defects are remedied, my passions restrained, and temptations overcome or allayed. In it greater grace is infused, growing virtue is nourished, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and charity fanned into flame.

You, my God, the protector of my soul, the strength of human weakness, and the giver of every interior consolation, have given and still do often give in this Sacrament great gifts to Your loved ones who communicate devoutly. Moreover, You give them many consolations amid their numerous troubles and lift them from the depths of dejection to the hope of Your protection. With new graces You cheer and lighten them within, so that they who are full of anxiety and without affection before Communion may find themselves changed for the better after partaking of this heavenly food and drink.

Likewise, You so deal with Your elect that they may truly acknowledge and plainly experience how weak they are in themselves and what goodness and grace they obtain from You. For though in themselves they are cold, obdurate, and wanting in devotion, through You they become fervent, cheerful, and devout.

Who, indeed, can humbly approach the fountain of sweetness and not carry away a little of it? Or who, standing before a blazing fire does not feel some of its heat? You are a fountain always filled with superabundance! You are a fire, ever burning, that never fails!

Therefore, while I may not exhaust the fullness of the fountain or drink to satiety, yet will I put my lips to the mouth of this heavenly stream that from it I may receive at least some small drop to refresh my thirst and not wither away. And if I cannot as yet be all heavenly or as full of fire as the cherubim and seraphim, yet I will try to become more devout and prepare my heart so that I may gather some small spark of divine fire from the humble reception of this life-giving Sacrament.

Whatever is wanting in me, good Jesus, Savior most holy, do You in Your kindness and grace supply for me, You Who have been pleased to call all unto You, saying: "Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you."

I, indeed, labor in the sweat of my brow. I am torn with sorrow of heart. I am laden with sin, troubled with temptations, enmeshed and oppressed by many evil passions, and there is none to help me, none to deliver and save me but You, my Lord God and Savior, to Whom I entrust myself and all I have, that You may protect me and lead me to eternal life. For the honor and glory of Your name receive me, You Who have prepared Your Body and Blood as food and drink for me. Grant, O Lord, my God and Savior, that by approaching Your Mysteries frequently, the zeal of my devotion may increase."

- Thomas A. Kempis; The Imitation of Christ

Day 14

"A poor man of Seville in Spain, having a fair and fruitful pear-tree, one of the fathers of the Inquisition desired (such tyrants' requests are commands) some of the fruit thereof. The poor man, not out of gladness to gratify, but fear to offend, as if it were a sin for him to have better fruit than his betters, (suspecting on his denial the tree might be made his own rod, if not his gallows,) plucked up tree, roots and all, and gave it unto him.

Allured with love to God, and advised by my own advantage, what he was frightened to do, I will freely perform. God calleth on me to present him with fruits meet for repentance. [Matt. 3:8] Yea, let him take all, soul and body, powers and parts, faculties and members of both, I offer a sacrifice unto himself. Good reason; for indeed the tree was his before it was mine, and I give him of his own.

Besides, it was doubtful whether the poor man's material tree, being removed, would grow again. Some plants transplanted (especially when old) become sullen, and do not enjoy themselves in a soil wherewith they were unacquainted. But sure I am when I have given myself to God, the moving of my soul shall be the mending of it, he will so dress αἶρειν and καθαίρειν, [John 15:2] so prune and purge me, that I shall bring forth most fruit in my age."

- Thomas Fuller; Good Thoughts In Bad Times And Other Papers

Day 15

"Sing to the Lord a new song!

Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord!

Bless his name!

Proclaim his salvation from day to day!

Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.

For great is the Lord, and worthy to be praised!

He is to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.

Honor and majesty are before him.

Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Praise the Lord, you families of nations,
give to the Lord glory and strength.

Give to the Lord the glory due to his name.

Bring an offering, and come into his courts.

Worship the Lord in holy array.

Tremble before him, all the earth.

Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."

The world stands firm.

It can't be moved.

He will judge the peoples with equity.

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice.

Let the sea roar, and its fullness!

Let the field and all that is in it exult!

Then all the trees of the woods shall sing for joy

before the Lord; for he comes,

for he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
the peoples with his truth."

- Psalm 96 WEB (with slight revisions)

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Further Reading

For further reading by authors such as those above see these titles:

TEACHINGS OF NATURE IN THE KINGDOM OF GRACE by C. H. Spurgeon

THE FOUR LOVES by C. S. Lewis

CHRISTS OBJECT LESSONS by E. G. White

LESSONS FROM NATURE: POEMS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS by John Bunyon